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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
7 April 1971

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

CEYLON

(Situation as of 1330 EST)

1. Despite government claims that the situation is under control, insurgent activity is apparently continuing. On the night of 6 April, there were simultaneous attacks on 13 police stations in Chilaw District, about 50 miles north of Colombo, plus attacks on a police patrol in Amparai District on the east coast, and on a police station in Polonnaruwa, in north-central Ceylon. Colombo itself was generally quiet yesterday, however.

2. In Colombo today a government spokesman claimed that the armed forces had moved in yesterday to clean up the remaining pockets of insurgent activities. He noted that the "armored corps" had cleared the Colombo-Kandy road and had reached Kegalla in three hours, meeting no resistance along the way. A plane had attacked insurgents who had blocked one bridge, inflicting heavy casualties on the revolutionaries and clearing the bridge for all traffic. The spokesman added that newly reported instances of insurgent activity were sporadic and scattered.

3. Despite these claims, the US charge believes the revolutionaries still control the Warakapola police station on the road between Colombo and Kegalla. He also believes they control a considerable area between Kegalla and Kandy, and that the road between these two locations is still blocked.

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4. In addition, the charge reports that the organization of and apparently widespread rural support for the insurgents exceeds any expectation. The insurgents are young, dedicated, and motivated by frustration over the government's failure to provide needed economic reforms. In areas which they control, the insurgents have worn khaki uniforms and in many cases seemed to be on friendly terms with local citizens. People familiar with Ceylonese youth claim that a majority of the young people are sympathetic with the Peoples Liberation Front, the "Che Guevarist" group singled out and proscribed by Prime Minister Bandaranaike as responsible for the attacks.

5. The British high commissioner, who met with Mrs. Bandaranaike at his request early today to review the situation, told the US charge that the prime minister was somber but in relatively good spirits. He believed she was in full control of the situation, with the security force chiefs reporting directly to her. He quoted her as stating that the insurgency movement, which she characterized as "extreme leftist," was "very extensive and highly organized" and that there was a "mastermind--still at large--directing the movement." The high commissioner received the impression that she believed the North Koreans were behind the movement and that the US had nothing to do with it, despite what some members of her government thought. He added his estimate that the insurgents numbered in the thousands.

6. Ceylon's military forces, including the 11,500-man police force, are not well equipped for handling island-wide insurgency. The "armored corps" referred to by the government official today consists of about 30 armored cars and scout cars and was called the Reconnaissance Regiment before today's briefing. The air force consists of four squadrons--transport, training, helicopter, and tactical--with its capability for tactical air support consisting primarily of three of the nine armed T-51 Jet Provost trainers in its inventory.

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8. The US charge believes that the insurgents will remain a large threat to the stability of the present Ceylonese Government even if their immediate effort fails. At present, however, he thinks the security forces are doing fairly well considering the surprising capability of the insurgents. Many government officials, on the other hand, appear to be frightened or surprised into inept inactivity.

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